

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 PM-03 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 IO-03 /040 W

----- 096834

R 180455Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9300

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0695

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BM

SUBJ: NE WIN OPTIMISTIC...IF PRC KEEPS HANDS OFF

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT NE WIN SAYS HE IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BURMA'S LONG RUN ECONOMIC PROSPECTS, "IF 'BIG BROTHER' LEAVES US ALONE." IN REGARD TO PRC INTENTIONS, HE CONFIRMED THAT THE GUB OPERATES ON THE OPTIMISTIC ASSUMPTION THAT THE PRC WILL ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE BATTLEFIELD IF THE GUB ARMY CAN CRUSH THE BCP, AND WILL NOT SIMPLY REACT BY OUTRIGHT INTERVENTION A LA KOREA, OR BY COUNTER-ESCALATION OF CHINESE SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENTS. THE PERSONAL IMPRESSION CONVEYED BY NE WIN WAS QUITE CONSISTENT WITH THE UPBEAT MOOD SUGGESTED BY HIS REMARKS. THIS WAS NOT A MAN CONTEMPLATING THROWING IN THE SPONGE, OR WORRYING ABOUT BEING THROWN OUT OF OFFICE. END SUMMARY.

1. A VISIT BY PRESIDENT NE WIN AND DAW NYI NYI MYINT TO A USIS EXHIBIT OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL BOOKS ON MARCH 15 AFFORDED A RARE OCCASION FOR CONVERSATION. HE WAS IN AN EXPANSIVE MOOD AND SEEMED GENUINELY STIMULATED BY THE BOOKS. HIS IMMEDIATE FOCUS WAS ON MINING-INDUSTRIAL-DEVELOPMENT RELATED BOOKS, SUCH AS PETROCHEMICALS, COMPUTERS, ETC., AND HE HAD AN AIDE TAKE DOWN
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TITLES IN THESE FIELDS TO BE ORDERED FOR GUB USE. HOWEVER, HIS

COMMENTS SHOWED A MUCH BROADER RANGE OF INTERESTS, FROM HOTEL CONSTRUCTION, TO POLLUTION, TO LASER TECHNOLOGY. HE SPOKE WITH PRIDE ABOUT HIS PERSONAL EXPERIMENTS IN DEVELOPING IMPROVED STRAINS OF RICE; HE WAS FASCINATED BY MATERIALS ON MARINE BIOLOGY AND FISH-HATCHERIES ("TLL HAVE TO SEND SOME OF MY CHAPS OVER TO HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT YOU ARE DOING," HE SAID).

2. NE WIN SEEMED IN PART TO BE PARADING HIS KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN SCIENCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS OWN ENTOURAGE, AS WELL AS US AMERICANS. FOR INSTANCE HE GAVE ME AND OTHER BYSTANDERS A SHORT DISSERTATION ON THE USE OF SATELLITES TO EXPLOIT SOLAR ENERGY. SOME OF HIS NOTIONS, AND HIS ENTHUSIASM ITSELF, MIGHT BE CONSIDERED AMATEURISH OR EVEN BOYISH. BUT HIS BASIC INTENT WAS QUOTE HARD-HEADED, TO JUDGE BY HIS DETAILED EXAMINATION OF TABLES OF CONTENTS AND INDICES OF THE BOOKS HE SELECTED FOR POSSIBLE ACQUISITION. HE COVERED A LOT OF GROUND IN THE HOUR AND A HALF HE SPENT AT THE EXHIBITION.

3. AFTER VIEWING THE BOOKS, WE WATCHED A VTR SCIENCE REPORT (ON MARINE BIOLOGY) AND TALKED FOR A FEW MINUTES OVER COFFEE. I ASKED NE WIN IF HE WAS AS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BURMA'S FUTURE PROSPECTS AS HIS INTENSE INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCES WOULD SUGGEST. HE SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC, IF THERE WAS PEACE, BUT THIS DEPENDED ON "BIG BROTHER". WOULD BIG BROTHER LEAVE THEM ALONE? I SAID I THOUGHT THE CHINESE WOULD CONTINUE TO OBSERVE THE SELF-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS THAT HAD GOVERNED THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INSURGENTS. NE WIN SAID THE GUB AT LEAST HAD TO OPERATE ON THAT ASSUMPTION. I ASKED HOW THE RECENT OPERATIONS AGAINST THE BCP HAD AFFECTED THE OUTLOOK, AND THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT THE LACK OF MUCH DIRECT CHINESE PARTICIPATION WAS INDEED ENCOURAGING. HE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT THE CHINESE WOULD CONTINUE TO LIMIT THEIR INVOLVEMENT, AND I SAID THAT THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED NPC, WHICH MAY HAVE INSTALLED PRAGMATISM AS THE DOMINANT THEME FOR THE NEXT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS, OUGHT TO FORESHADOW A CONTINUATION OF PAST RESTRAINT. WHETHER OR NOT OUT OF POLITENESS, NE WIN AGREED.

4. COMMENT: (A) THIS CONVERSATION PROVIDED ONLY A MOST LIMITED READING ON NE WIN'S CURRENT MOOD. HAD I BEEN AT ALL ALARMIST ABOUT CHINA, I MIGHT HAVE GOT ALARMIST FEEDBACK. NEVERTHELESS, WITH ALL DUE DISCOUNT FOR SUBJECTIVE ERROR, IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT
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NE WIN IS OPERATING ON OPTIMISTIC ASSUMPTIONS BOTH ABOUT BURMA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE AND ABOUT ITS SECURITY POSITION.

B. NE WIN WAS IN APPARENT EXCELLENT HEALTH AND SPIRITS. AS HE LEFT HE GAVE US A DEMONSTRATION OF ONE OF THE TECHNIQUES BY WHICH HE CULTIVATES THE LOYALTY OF THOSE UNDER HIM. HE JOKED WITH OUR INFORMATION OFFICER, MR. FRANCO, ABOUT HIS FAMOUS NAMESAKE, AND CALLED PAO HANSON "MR. HANDSOME," DOUBTLESS FIXING THEIR

NAMES AND FACES IN HIS MIND FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. ONE OF THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF WHAT PASSES FOR CHARISMA IN NE WIN'S PERSONALITY IS HIS PHENOMENAL MEMORY FOR PEOPLE. WHILE REVIEWING TROOPS HE WILL STOP AND ADDRESS A SERGEANT BY NAME, ASK WHETHER THE MAN'S SISTER RECOVERED FROM HER OPERATION, ETC.

C. THAT THE VISIT WAS ALSO INTENDED BY PRESIDENT AS A DEMONSTRATION OF WARMTH TOWARD THE UNITED STATES IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE INSTRUCTED NEWS AGENCY BURMA (NAB) TO GIVE THE STORY FRONTPAGE TOP-FOLD PHOTO COVERAGE. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR SURE WHY NE WIN WANTED TO FAVOR US IN THIS WAY. IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS THE GUB HAS GIVEN THE IMPRESSION OF FAVORING THE USSR; PERHAPS NE WIN WAS SIMPLY DESIROUS OF READJUSTING HIS "TILT" A NOTCH OR TWO BACK TOWARD NEUTRAL.
OSBORN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PERSONAL OPINION, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL SITUATION, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975RANGOO00695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750093-0942
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750340/aaaabjwy.tel
Line Count: 130
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <13 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NE WIN OPTIMISTIC...IF PRC KEEPS HANDS OFF SUMMARY: PRESIDENT NE WIN SAYS HE IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BURMA'S
TAGS: PFOR, ECON, PINS, BM, (NE WIN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006